Touring a French City

Classroom at a Glance	
Teacher:	Robin Neuman
Language:	French
Grade:	8
School:	Concord Middle School, Concord, Massachusetts
Lesson Date:	January 17
Class Size:	19
Schedule:	48 minutes, four days a week

Video Summary

In this lesson, students practice how to give and follow directions. Students begin by describing several buildings in a classroom-sized model they built of a French city. Then they assume the roles of tour guides and tourists and take turns giving and following directions. At the end of the lesson, students randomly select a building name from a bag and describe the building to the class.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Comparisons: Cultural

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- backward planning
- thematic units

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Context

"When the students did this activity, they became the people in the city. Having built the buildings, they took a lot of ownership of the buildings. They were so proud to show them off that they kept using more and more language and trying to say more things about each building." —Robin Neuman

School Profile

Robin Neuman teaches eighth-grade French and is also the chair of the foreign languages department at Concord Middle School in Concord, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. The 700 students in grades 6–8 are primarily from Concord, with some students coming from the METCO program, a city-to-suburban school desegregation project. At the end of fifth grade, students elect to take French or Spanish, both of which are three-year programs at the middle school. Concord uses the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines instead of level designations to name their courses. At the end of eighth grade, students are recommended for placement into Novice Accelerated, Novice I Part 2, or Novice Review French in high school. There, the progression continues to Intermediate and Advanced French.

Year at a Glance

Review Units From Grades 6 and 7

The City
- **Identify and locate places in a city**
- **Describe a city**
- **Say and write what is or isn't found in a city, what is sold in stores, and what is done in a building**
- **Say and write how often they go to a store and why they go there**
- **Ask for, give, and follow directions**
- **Make plans to do various activities**
- **Produce a culturally accurate model of a French building**

How To Do Things
- Give suggestions and commands
- Create a commercial or demonstrate how to do something—on video or live in the classroom

Class Context, cont'd.

Lesson Design

When designing her lessons, Ms. Neuman refers to the Standards, the Massachusetts State Frameworks, and the Concord Public Schools' Student Learning Outcomes to determine what students need to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of each unit (see Resources). She also uses her textbook for basic vocabulary, but expands upon it so that students can accomplish the goals of the unit. "I write scaffolded lessons," Ms. Neuman says, "building on each previous concept until all the steps are there to have students accomplish the outcomes." She also makes sure that interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication, as well as cultural understanding, are developed and assessed in each unit.

The Lesson

This lesson featured one of the culminating activities for the 10-week City unit. First, each student was randomly assigned a building (such as a pharmacy) in a typical French city. The student researched the building online and compared it to a similar building in a typical American city. Once students had an understanding of what elements made their building unique to the French culture, they had one month to individually design and build the structure outside of class time. (The art teacher helped with construction as needed.) During class, Ms. Neuman held daily check-ins to keep students on track and to problem-solve when difficulties arose. Students brought the completed buildings into class and used them for three weeks to practice vocabulary related to the buildings' appearance and purpose. Students were also assessed on cultural understanding, based on their explanation of what made their building uniquely French. The complete

> ### Year at a Glance, cont'd.
>
> Paris
> - Make plans to take a trip
> - Narrate in the past tense
> - Use the Internet to plan an imaginary two-day trip to Paris
> - Produce a scrapbook of the imaginary trip
>
> Food
> - Talk about foods
> - Prepare a grocery list
> - Ask for a certain quantity of something
> - Order a meal
>
> Clothing
> - Name, describe, and compare clothing
> - Make purchases
> - Make and respond to requests
>
> End-of-Year Summary
> - Create and present a thematic slideshow, using past, present, and future tenses

Class Context, cont'd.

city was then assembled and used for two weeks for continued vocabulary review, including an activity in which students gave and followed directions around the city. The unit concluded with additional reading, writing, and listening activities about giving and following directions.

Key Teaching Strategies

- Expanding Oral Discourse: The teacher designs and conducts activities that move students in advanced language courses away from single-sentence responses toward sustained discourse.

- Role-Playing: Role-playing is an activity in which students dramatize characters or pretend that they are in new locations or situations. It may or may not have a cultural element. This activity challenges students by having them use language in new contexts.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- What are the benefits of modeling interactions before students do them on their own?

- What instructional purpose do long-term projects serve in the foreign language classroom?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

- How much independent research can beginning students be expected to do? What proportion of the information gathered should be in the target language? What proportion of English-language information is acceptable?

- What factors should be considered when asking students to do projects at home?

Watch the Video

As you watch "Touring a French City," take notes on Ms. Neuman's instructional strategies, particularly how she organizes and models activities involving the student-built French city. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- What language skills do students acquire through this project?

- What cultural knowledge do students acquire through this project? What cultural stereotypes must be addressed with projects such as this one?

- Describe the students' oral proficiency in terms of their ability to provide information, extend the length of each interaction, and express reactions.

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Neuman's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.

Video Segment: Describing the City

You'll find this segment approximately 7 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

Student pairs describe the city buildings to one another.

- Beginning with Ms. Neuman's model conversation about the buildings, describe the stages in which students assume control of communication in this activity.

- What kinds of language functions are students demonstrating (for example, naming, providing information, describing, and expressing opinions)?

- When talking about the buildings, what proportion of students' remarks are rehearsed and what proportion are spontaneous?

- How do students respond to this activity?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Video Segment: Giving Directions

You'll find this segment approximately 14 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 6 minutes.

As tour guides and tourists, students practice giving and following directions while walking through their city.

- How does Ms. Neuman model this activity?

- How do the name tags facilitate student interaction and movement through the city?

- How does this activity appeal to multiple learning styles and intelligences?

- How does this activity allow Ms. Neuman to assess student success in giving directions? In following directions?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- How do you decide whether or not to devote significant time to a project? How might you incorporate several large projects into a year- or semester-long curriculum?

- How do you incorporate multiple Standards—for example, language and cultural Standards—into a large, independent project?

- How might you encourage students with limited vocabulary to use personal expression?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

- "U.S. and Italian Homes" (Italian) illustrates the use of strong visual support for teaching about habitats.

- "A Place I Call Home" (Arabic) shows how a teacher uses technology to provide students with a wide range of authentic cultural materials.

- "Hearing Authentic Voices" (Spanish) presents modeling and sequencing activities ranging from precommunicative practice to personal expression.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Design a culminating project that provides students with a memorable foreign language experience. A city/town unit such as Ms. Neuman's can be done in any language. Add a historical element by having students design a town in a certain time period, such as Paris in the Middle Ages. You could show a relevant film, such as *Notre dame de Paris,* either before or after the project. When designing a culminating project, include time for intensive planning and revision based on experience. Consider the tools and materials that students will need at home or at school. As with any project, incorporate opportunities for assessment and make clear to students your expectations for the various skills and knowledge that you will be observing. In addition to language acquisition and use, a culminating project can help you assess students' research skills, cultural knowledge, and creativity.

- Lead students toward a desired performance by modeling activities. Modeling is not only an effective instructional strategy, but it also enables you to conduct more of your class in the target language without having to resort to English. For each major task in her lesson, Ms. Neuman modeled the desired interaction. She began with either a teacher/student interaction or a demonstration of the performance herself. Sometimes she also had a student pair model the activity before opening it up to the whole class. Typically, an effective build-up begins with the teacher (1) demonstrating the task, (2) asking one or two students probing questions about the topic, (3) having students work in pairs to ask and answer questions on their own, and (4) having students interact with many classmates for a set period of time.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Building Guidelines*
Guidelines students used to research and build their French city model

Building Rubrics*
Rubrics that Ms. Neuman used to assess students on different aspects of the building project

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines
https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012

Concord Public Schools: Teaching and Learning Reports and Documents
http://www.concordps.org/teaching-learning/reports-and-documents/

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/

Robin Neuman's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Google France
http://www.google.fr
The French-language version of the popular search engine; note: students used this site to research French buildings

The Paris Pages
http://www.paris.org
A collection of resources about Paris (available in English and French); note: students used this site to research French buildings

Yahoo! France
http://www.fr.yahoo.com
The French-language version of the popular search engine; note: students used this site to research French buildings

Resources, cont'd.

Print Resources:

Ellis, D.L. *Life in a French Town*. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Co., 1988.

Rothfeld, Steven (photographer), and André Aciman. *Entrez: Signs of France*. New York: Artisan, 2001.

Standards

World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

The *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding. This lesson correlates to the following Standards:

Communication
Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes

Standard: Interpersonal Communication
Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Cultures
Interact with cultural competence and understanding

Standard: Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives
Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Standard: Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives
Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Comparisons
Develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence

Standard: Cultural Comparisons
Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Notes